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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 11th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PIRIZ-BALLON (Uruguay)

later: Miss DIOP (Senegal)
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

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1. Ms. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICHL (Austria) said that although the problem of global warming could not be addressed without examining patterns of energy production and consumption, the documents of the United Nations Conference were not as explicit as might be wished. While it was necessary to provide sufficient energy for sustainable development, current trends could not continue without grave consequences for the environment and global climate. Little had been done since the adoption of the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy; unfortunately energy only became a focus of attention when oil prices rose or conflicts erupted. She welcomed the proposal of the United Nations Solar Energy Group for Environment and Development to establish a new international solar energy agency with sufficient political and financial resources, as she welcomed the establishment of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and recalled that Austria was playing an active role in the ongoing negotiations on a European energy charter.

2. Mr. SETH (India) said that full account must be taken of the fact that the overriding priorities of developing countries were economic and social development and poverty eradication, and that those countries' energy consumption would need to grow in consequence. The role of the United Nations in promoting the development of energy resources thus remained as important as ever. Furthermore, the tasks before the newly created Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development were promotional in nature and could not be dovetailed into the functions of the Commission on Sustainable Development, whose function would be one of monitoring and review.

3. India had laid great emphasis on the development of nonconventional energy sources. Wind electric generators had been installed and the process of wind mapping had reached an advanced stage. Great emphasis was placed on the utilization of solar energy, both from solar thermal routes and from solar photovoltaics. India had undertaken local research and development in amorphous silicon technology, and hoped to use the results extensively after field trials. Solar thermal energy had been used chiefly to heat water by solar plate collectors, in industrial and domestic applications.

(Mr. Seth, India)

4. Many of its programmes were being carried out in the framework of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. India was keen to share its experience with other countries interested in maximizing the feasibility of nonconventional energy sources. In the context of South-South cooperation, his delegation drew special attention to a project for solar energy applications that was being coordinated by India. His delegation would be ready to share the fruits of India's efforts with other countries, both developing and developed.

5. His delegation had highlighted some of the areas relating to new and renewable sources of energy in which it expected the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development to set agendas, goals and timetables. It was especially important that the Committee promote the transfer of technology on concessional and preferential terms, as well as adequate financial and other incentives to help the spread of new and renewable sources of energy world wide.

6. Since his delegation had spoken on the subject of development of energy resources of developing countries at the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council, it would simply express once again its concern that instability of supply and prices of energy played havoc with the economies of oil-importing developing countries. The oil shocks and the uncertainty during the Gulf crisis had had a severe impact on many developing countries. In that regard, his delegation agreed with the conclusions of the Secretary-General's report (A/47/202), that it was important to avoid a false sense of energy supply security; that comprehensive measures should be taken to accelerate energy exploration and development in the developing countries; that very few of the objectives repeatedly endorsed by the General Assembly over the past 10 years had been achieved; and that the Assembly should consider the preparation of an expanded programme of action in that regard. The meeting of energy experts the following year must focus attention on that crucial area.

7. Mr. ARRIA (Venezuela) said that whereas in the past, people had assumed that nature was invulnerable and resources inexhaustible, they now realized that that was not the case. A global approach to the environment was thus indispensable. It was not enough, however, simply to assess the overall nature of the problem: the lifestyles of both rich and poor had a significant impact on the ecological system as a whole. The poor caused damage to the environment because of their lack of resources, whereas the rich polluted it with their excesses. All efforts to overcome environmental problems would be unavailing unless they were directed towards achieving a sustainable level of development.

8. Sadly, there had been no real commitment to the transfer of sufficient resources and clean technologies from the developed to the developing world. Yet, in a world in which all were interdependent, to refuse to transfer the resources and technologies vital to sustainable development would be tantamount to betraying mankind's common humanity. The question was, how long

(Mr. Arria, Venezuela)

it would be before that fact was acknowledged; for delay would prove extremely costly.

9. Awareness of the pollution caused by hydrocarbons, together with the impact of prices, had initially stimulated research into new, renewable and clean sources of energy. Ironically, that heightened awareness had led to a fall in petroleum prices, which in turn had reduced the incentive to conduct research into renewable sources of energy. It was thus clear that low petroleum prices did not contribute to fostering research into new and renewable sources of energy. To blame the situation solely on petroleum and its derivatives was like blaming gold for greed, inflation and injustice. The real root of the problem was the use to which fossil fuels and hydrocarbons were put and, especially, the development of destructive lifestyles and patterns of consumption. The world community was still paying for the consequences of irresponsible use of those resources. A fundamental change was needed in the relationship between human beings and the planetary ecological system. The technological revolution and population growth had led to an unsustainable pattern of development. The dominant economic actors and the free market must be brought to an understanding of that problem, and it must be acknowledged that the market economy actively encouraged non-sustainable patterns of development that ultimately militated against the well-being of society. The petroleum-producing countries must involve themselves more in research into new and renewable sources of energy.

10. Mr. AMIN-MANSOUR (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Persian Gulf conflict had had considerable adverse environmental and economic consequences on the countries of the region. Although the Secretary-General's report (A/47/265) was very useful it fell far short of a comprehensive approach to the damages suffered by all the countries of the region notwithstanding the mandate given under General Assembly resolution 46/216. He invited all States, international and non-governmental organizations to cooperate with the nations of the Persian Gulf region to study and mitigate the environmental deterioration of the region and called for the strengthening of the capacities of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) and for more international financial support for environmental rehabilitation programmes.

11. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/202), he noted that consumption of commercial energy in developing countries was expected to continue to increase rapidly for some time. Unfortunately, however, for a number of reasons investment in energy sectors had been reduced. In order to meet the increasing energy needs of the developing countries, serious consideration needed to be given to the development of energy resources particularly in developing countries. In that context, there was a great need for concerted and close cooperation among consumers and producers of energy in order to guarantee an uninterrupted supply of energy world wide. It would also be a good idea to examine ways and means of promoting exploration for and use of natural gas. In that connection the United Nations system could greatly contribute to energy supply security through the provision of technical assistance to the developing countries.

(Mr. Amin-Mansour, Islamic Republic of Iran)

12. As the general contribution of new and renewable sources of energy had remained stable at about 14 per cent of total world energy supply, his delegation believed that the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy in 1991 provided the modalities to intensify national, multilateral and international activities in that field and could accelerate the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action. Finally, although its restructuring was not the only way to solve existing problems, his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and expressed the hope that the initiative would provide the necessary momentum to international cooperation in the development and utilization of such resources.

13. Miss Diop (Senegal), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

14. Mr. AL-SABAH (Kuwait) commended the report contained in document A/47/265. The forces of the Iraqi regime had purposefully leaked 6-8 million barrels of oil into the Gulf, torched oil wells and laid mines throughout Kuwait in the greatest ecological crime of the age. The pollution had affected the air, sea and land equally. Lakes of oil covered large areas of the desert, obliterating plant life and posing a threat to human health. Hundreds of Kuwaiti civilians had lost their lives through explosions of mines or ammunition left by the Iraqi regime. Marine life would be affected for decades by the oil spill. The ecological disaster had had grave social and economic consequences, including loss of jobs, particularly in fishing and agriculture. Detailed studies needed to be made of the ecological impact of the disaster and a strategy drawn up to rehabilitate the environment of the region.

15. Since it was beyond the capacity of the region to provide the necessary response, he appealed for increased international cooperation and the formulation of a strategy by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to mitigate the environmental consequences and to alleviate the social and economic problems arising from the disaster. Finally, he agreed with the Secretary-General that there was a need to develop an effective international mechanism to guide and coordinate the response to future large-scale ecological crises.

16. Mr. ISAKOV (Russian Federation) welcomed the recent increase in the use of new and renewable sources of energy, and the introduction of relevant technologies in many developing countries. The share of new and renewable sources of energy in the national energy balances of some developing countries had now reached 60-70 per cent, with an overall indicator of 14 per cent.

17. Prevailing patterns of energy use in the world had led to a massive deterioration of the environment. It was thus of crucial importance to give priority to environmental safety in economic growth, a task which called for diversification of energy sources through the use of clean new and renewable sources of energy. It was clearly necessary to do everything possible to

(Mr. Isakov, Russian Federation)

stimulate the transfer of technology and a flow of direct foreign investment; and his delegation fully supported calls for free and non-discriminatory exchange of advanced technology in that sphere. The United Nations project to establish networks of centres of the latest international experience in the sphere of new and renewable energy sources was extremely important in that regard. The Russian Federation was willing to involve in that network one or two national scientific centres dealing with the uses of solar energy.

18. The report of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy (A/47/36) offered a realistic appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action. Overall, the results left a great deal to be desired, especially with regard to promotion of transfer and adaptation of technology for non-conventional energy sources. One of the major obstacles to broad introduction of technology was the lack of material resources and the absence of a proper scientific and technical basis. There was undoubtedly a great deal of potential in systematic conversion of military production, both in the developed and in the developing countries. Enhanced South-South cooperation also offered encouraging prospects. The newly established Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development must give priority to the study of ways and means of using conversion processes to enhance the transfer of relevant technologies, and take account of the interests of various groups of countries, including those whose economies were undergoing transition, making full use of their accumulated experience.

19. With regard to the proposal to establish an international agency on the use of renewable energy resources, his delegation considered that the establishment of such an agency must not result in any duplication of effort on the part of the various agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, or in any increase in budgetary expenditure. The necessary resources should be mobilized on a voluntary basis.

20. His delegation welcomed the joint memorandum concerning a new global energy policy interrelationship, issued following the Ministerial Workshop on Energy sponsored by the Governments of Egypt, Italy and Norway (A/37/390), adding that it would be prepared to consider the participation of representatives of the Russian Federation in the next meeting of that type.

21. His delegation also welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on energy exploration and development trends in developing countries (A/47/202), and agreed that continued development would lead to a further increase in energy use requiring significant resources with which to create additional energy sources. To meet that challenge, developing countries would need first to mobilize their own internal resources on the basis of effective macro- and micro-economic policy and efficient market mechanisms. Those efforts must, however, be accompanied by external support. In that regard, it would be appropriate to step up work on preparation of an expanded programme of action for the exploration and development of energy resources in developing

(Mr. Isakov, Russian Federation)

countries, in accordance with Assembly resolution 45/209. Special attention should be given to ensuring environmental security of energy resources in the light of the final documents of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, achieving an optimum balance between traditional and new sources of energy, and increasing use of energy from small rivers and other environmentally friendly energy sources. The Secretariat might consider producing a special report summarizing world experience in macro- and micro-energy use. Increased attention to the environmental aspects of energy resources, particularly new and renewable sources of energy, could do much to help increase the flow of outside investment to the economies of the developing countries.

22. Mr. SHAKIR (Iraq) said that as a result of the aggression carried out under the cover of international legality, Iraq had suffered tremendous ecological damage, which had had grave consequences for human life, health and welfare. Electric power stations had been destroyed, making it impossible to provide drinking water or to treat industrial water, thus polluting rivers and groundwater and creating new polluted marshlands in many areas. According to a report by the British Atomic Energy Authority, the coalition forces had used missiles of depleted uranium containing chemical toxins and radioactive substances which would threaten the population and the environment for generations to come.

23. The report contained in document A/47/265, about which he otherwise had reservations, stated that military activities had devastated large areas of the land and adversely affected the agricultural production and livestock of Iraq. Iraq had suffered from black and acid rains arising from the burning of oil installations; the consequent air and soil pollution had affected crops. Water had been polluted with chemical and organic substances from industrial plants which had been bombed and destroyed. The marine environment of Iraqi territorial waters had suffered grave damage from the bombing of Iraqi oil tankers. Many land animals and birds had been killed or forced to migrate by the bombing and the spread of toxic substances in the environment. The area of greenery had been reduced and desertification threatened since the public had been forced to cut down trees for firewood in the absence of fuel and cooking gas during the aggression. As a result of the economic blockade, a number of projects to combat desertification, reclaim desert lands or monitor water quality had had to be stopped.

24. As the embargo prevented Iraq from using its economic resources to protect its environment or to import medicines, vaccines and other health supplies the health situation continued to deteriorate. Food was short, diseases were spreading and mortality rates were up. In view of Iraq's continuing compliance with the obligations imposed upon it there was no longer any objective justification for the embargo, and he therefore requested that it be lifted.

25. Mr. NOURUZOV (Azerbaijan) said that from the mid-nineteenth century Azerbaijan had pioneered the extraction and processing of petroleum, and by the turn of the century had been producing 53 per cent of the world's hydrocarbon resources; it had thus been one of the first centres of transnational corporations and a major industrial centre of Europe. The overthrow of the 1918-1920 Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, the first in the Orient, and Azerbaijan's subsequent inclusion in the Soviet Union had meant a complete break with the initial development model of the energy sector. The rapacious exploitation of Azerbaijan's oil resources for over seven decades had had disastrous ecological consequences, and the use of outmoded techniques had impaired extraction potential.

26. Azerbaijan's newly-won independence would allow a complete economic reform and the overhaul of the energy sector. That, however, would only be possible with the help of the major transnational oil corporations, international financial institutions, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and regional and interregional economic blocs. It was vital to draw up a model for such cooperation, to set priorities for the development of the sector. Azerbaijan would also welcome expertise from transnational oil corporations; work was currently under way to draw up large-scale contracts with such entities, and he hoped for cooperation with the Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD), UNDP, IMF and the World Bank in that respect. Azerbaijan had a dire need for specialists in international trade law and international accounts, both on a consultancy basis and for training of national staff.

27. Azerbaijan stood on the brink of ecological catastrophe; unless emergency measures were taken at the international level, environmental degradation in the oil-producing region, in particular the Apsheron peninsula and the Caspian Sea shelf, could become irreversible. In order to avert an ecological disaster, he requested that a group of experts be dispatched to the area by UNDP and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to report on the ecological situation there. The Government of Azerbaijan would provide all possible assistance to such a group.

28. Finally, the natural environment of Azerbaijan, in particular, the Apsheron peninsula, with its unparalleled levels of sunshine and wind, would provide an ideal setting for the study and exploitation of alternative sources of energy.

29. Mr. GOUDIMA (Ukraine) said that, in spite of the progress made in promoting the use of new energy sources, his delegation could not but agree with the conclusions contained in the report of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy (A/47/36), to the effect that the decade since the Nairobi Conference had essentially been a decade of lost opportunity.

(Mr. Goudima, Ukraine)

30. Thus, while supporting the overall thrust of the Nairobi Programme of Action, his delegation endorsed the conclusion of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, regarding a possible revision of priorities in the light of changes in the energy, environmental and technology spheres over the past decade. His delegation also looked forward to effective work within the new subsidiary body, the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development, the establishment of which should help enhance United Nations activity in that important area.

31. Ukraine, which had suffered seriously as a result of the Chernobyl disaster, had had to rethink the role and place of traditional energy sources in the development of its economy. It was convinced of the need for an environmentally sound energy base for the country. Thus, despite the difficulty of finding new ways of providing stable energy resources, its Parliament had frozen construction of new nuclear power stations until 1995. Ukraine was striving to promote energy efficiency and the use of new and renewable sources of energy. In view of its natural and climatic characteristics, it was currently making large-scale use of only one renewable source of energy, namely, hydropower. At the same time, potential existed for the use of biomass, geothermal, wind and especially solar energy.

32. Development of energy resources in the developing countries was one of the major tasks facing the United Nations in the sphere of its social and economic activities. His delegation supported United Nations activities carried out in implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 40/208, 43/193 and 45/209. The report of the Secretary-General on energy exploration and development trends in developing countries (A/47/202) was well thought out and of great practical interest. It was impossible not to agree with the conclusion contained therein, that a resumption of economic growth, particularly in the developing world, could lead to yet another energy crisis, which could be prevented if precautionary measures were taken by the international community. His delegation was convinced that the global economy needed such an internationally agreed regime for energy policy, designed to eliminate destabilizing fluctuations in the level of supply and prices. It must also be a just regime, with regard both to producers and to consumers, and must not limit access to reliable energy sources. Good prospects for establishing such a regime had been opened up in connection with the signing in The Hague of the European energy charter, which provided a political and legal basis for future energy cooperation in Europe, and which might also have a positive impact on energy at global level. His delegation was counting on the conclusion of work on the basic and additional protocols to that text.

33. With regard to agenda item 78 (e), his delegation supported efforts by the international community to mitigate the environmental consequences of the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait. It agreed with the conclusion contained in the report by the Secretary-General (A/47/265), on the need for an effective international mechanism to coordinate activities in response to large-scale

(Mr. Goudima, Ukraine)

environmental crises in the future. At the same time, it felt that in view of the harmful effects on the environment of the Gulf war, it was necessary to rethink some aspects of liability of States for ensuring environmental safety. Ukraine supported the idea of establishing an institute for international liability for damage to the environment, and in particular, an international environmental court; and was convinced of the need to lay down principles for environmental diplomacy, and to make full use of the potential offered by the Security Council in that regard.

34. Ms. ASHRAF (UNESCO) said that as the environment had a limited capacity to absorb the damage resulting from the production of conventional sources of energy, it was important that the significant potential which solar and other renewable energies had to offer be exploited. Accordingly, the twenty-sixth session of the General Conference of UNESCO had agreed on the holding of a second World Solar Summit at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, in July 1993. It would provide an opportunity to assess overall technological developments in solar energy over the previous two decades and assess the successes and failures in development of other renewable energies. The Summit might define the prospects and potential of renewable energies for the next decade and beyond by instituting a world decade for solar energy to intensify cooperation in the promotion and exchange of ideas and information.

35. UNESCO had been involved in strengthening international cooperation and national capacities in the field of renewable sources of energy through regional pilot projects on an energy information exchange, providing specific study and research grants, training and updating existing regional data banks. In relation to the intersectoral and inter-agency cooperation project on environmental education and information, her organization was developing specific pilot projects with a view to introducing the environmental dimension in the teaching programmes of faculties or schools. UNESCO had also organized in April 1992 its third Science and Culture Forum on the theme "Towards eco-ethics: alternative visions of culture, science, technology and nature" at Belem, Brazil. UNESCO sincerely hoped that the declaration adopted at that meeting would be a global eco-ethics involving the whole world.

36. UNESCO shared the concern of the international community at the adverse impact that the deterioration in the environment as a result of the Persian Gulf conflict had on the economic activities of Kuwait and other countries of the region. The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, in cooperation with UNEP and the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME) was involved in various activities such as workshops, training courses on marine data and the application of remote sensing techniques to study the marine environment. UNESCO/IOC was also participating in two oceanographic cruises in the region. The findings of the cruises and work being undertaken in individual countries of the region would be reviewed at an international scientific conference which had been planned in cooperation with ROPME, UNEP and the countries in the region for the third quarter of 1993 in Tehran.

(Ms. Ashraf, UNESCO)

37. With a view to formulating integrated approaches towards development and considering the importance of issues related to the sustainable development of the region, UNESCO was also involved in a project for assistance to Kuwaiti children and families aimed at establishing a family/community multi-purpose resource centre to provide an appropriate environment for the healthy development of Kuwaiti children. Moreover, a high-level multidisciplinary mission organized by UNESCO had visited Kuwait earlier on in the year and reviewed the situation of that country's higher education and made proposals for reinforcing programmes for higher education and scientific research institutions.

38. Mr. CISSE (Senegal) said that, although more than 10 years had elapsed since the adoption of the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, the energy situation of non-oil producing developing countries remained virtually unchanged. According to a recent study of the African Development Bank (ADB), biomass energy remained by far the major energy resource in Africa as a whole, sometimes accounting for more than 88 per cent of the energy balance. That was the reason for the serious deterioration of the environment.

39. Despite a shortage of financial resources, the developing countries had sustained their efforts to promote new and renewable sources of energy. Senegal, for instance, was pursuing a policy to guarantee the quality of renewable biomass energy based on large-scale reforestation projects, which were being administered by rural communities, the development of replacement fuels such as butane and peat and the efficient use of wood-based fuels. Having realized very early on the importance of concerted action, Senegal had participated in the development of regional hydroelectric projects such as the Senegal River Development Organization involving three countries. As far as solar and wind power were concerned, it was pursuing strategies that focused on the need to train management personnel at all levels and in all specialities in the area of research and development as well as in establishing local production plants. In the area of solar energy, Senegal received substantial assistance from some European countries and from Japan.

40. None the less, Senegal and the other countries of Africa continued to be hampered in their efforts and believed that international cooperation in the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action in developing countries should be strengthened, that the transfer of technologies to developing countries should take place on preferential and concessional terms and that UNDP, in the context of efforts to mobilize sufficient financial resources, should revitalize the Energy Account.

41. The United Nations system as a whole ought to play a key role in strengthening national institutions in developing countries in the area of data dissemination and in the setting up of energy databases. Senegal welcomed the establishment of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development which would help to ensure vital

(Mr. Cisse, Senegal)

coordination among the activities carried out in that area by the agencies of the United Nations system and other institutions in order to put the Nairobi Programme of Action into effect in a rational and harmonious manner.

42. Mr. JIN Tongchao (China) said that his delegation strongly hoped that there would be a clear-cut division of responsibilities between the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was to be established during the current session of the General Assembly, and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and that the mandates of the two bodies would complement one another. The idea of merging the two bodies was premature, as the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development had yet to demonstrate what it could do.

43. Programmes involving new and renewable sources of energy figured prominently in China's national development plan. Over the past 10 years or so, some US$ 5 billion had been invested in the development of such sources of energy resulting in the establishment of a cluster of new and renewable sources of energy-oriented industries as well as national and local centres devoted to research and development in that field. In carrying out its research and development activities in that area, China had always attached great importance to cooperation with the United Nations and its specialized agencies and other developed as well as developing countries as such cooperation benefited all the sides involved. An example of such cooperation was the hosting by China, in cooperation with the Department for Economic and Social Development of the United Nations, of an international seminar-cum study tour on mini-hydropower development in Hangzhou province.

44. Since energy was the prime mover for development, any energy shortage in developing countries constituted a severe constraint on development. Despite the fact that energy production in developing countries over the past 30 years had increased fourfold, supply still fell short of demand. It was not only necessary but also in the long-term interests of the international community to assist developing countries in developing their energy resources and initiating energy conservation programmes.

45. China was adopting a number of policy measures designed, inter alia, to promote energy conservation and to raise energy efficiency, to speed up hydroelectric power development, to focus on research and development relating to new and renewable sources of energy and to ensure broad dissemination of new technologies that were energy efficient, energy saving and environmentally friendly.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.